

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

0581

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Putin of Russia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Putin

Notetakers: Alex Joves, Jeff Houle,
Danielle Phillips, and Mark Robinson

Interpreter: Peter Afanasenko

DATE, TIME: January 23, 2003, 7:34 - 8:07 a.m., EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Yes, sir, Vladimir, how are you? (U)

President Putin: Good morning. Very well, thank you very much.
I am very glad to hear from you George. (U)

The President: I am upbeat and I hope you are. (U)

President Putin: Thank you. (U)

The President: I have a couple of issues I think we need to
deal with, and I want to talk to you about two issues. (U)

President Putin: Please. (U)

The President: The first issue is North Korea. First, I wanted
to thank you, Vladimir, for your active diplomacy on this issue.
The idea of Kim Jong Il having a nuclear weapon is dangerous for
the world. You have recognized that, and I want to thank you
for that. By your active participation, it shows the world that
this is not a North Korea-U.S. issue, but an issue that must be
solved with friends working together on a multi-national basis.
I believe by working multi-nationally, that Kim Jong Il will
understand that if he expects help and respect, then he must
abide by certain rules. To this end, moreover, we will study

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified by: Gregory L. Schulte

Reason: 1.5(d)

Declassify on: 1/23/13

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2

any proposal that you think is wise and necessary that will bring logic and sensibility to this man. My suggestion is that we get this to the United Nations Security Council, without the threat of sanctions, and then establish a multi-national committee of which you will be a key participant along with China, Japan, and our European friends to deal with this issue. But, my final point on this issue is that the sooner we get the issue to an international forum, the sooner we will be able to achieve our common objectives. That is really all I have to say on North Korea. I would be glad to hear your response on that or I can give you my thoughts on Iraq if you like. (S)

President Putin: George, I would like to hear your thoughts on Iraq and then I can react to both issues. (S)

The President: Okay sir, I will. First, let me say I am very disappointed with the progress being made in Iraq. Saddam Hussein has no intention of disarming. The inspectors are not there to find a needle in a haystack, they are there to confirm whether or not he is disarming. We have many examples of deception, which I have yet to explain to the American people or the world. We have a clear case that I will make at some point in time and everyone will see the logic and reasoning of the case. As you know, we are sending troops to the region. It is important for Saddam to know we are serious. The only way for Saddam to disarm is for him to know the intent of the world. I have made no decision militarily, but I am very serious about him disarming. We are continuing to work with our friends, such as you. I will continue to consult with you, my friend. Of course I watch with interest, the diplomatic, let me see if I can think of a polite word, games, being played with the French, Germans, and the British, all of which sends mixed signals to Saddam Hussein. Let me be clear, the British are with us, but it seems there is a rivalry between the three, that is my point. My only point, Vladimir, is that time is running out, and the idea of extending the inspections does nothing more than embolden Saddam, and give him more time to try to fool the world and delay the inevitable. I still hold out hope that Saddam will disarm peacefully, but if not, I am prepared my friend, to lead a coalition to disarm him. I will stay in touch with you as issues develop and I am beginning to pack my bags for the 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg. I am saving my best tie. (S)

President Putin: You ended your conversation on a very positive note. If you are finished, I will allow myself to respond to what you have just said. (U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

(The President: Yes, please. (U)

President Putin: So, I will begin from what you finished on Iraq. I remember where we started. You have on Iraq an order to make him accept international inspectors without any conditions. And we did it because I did what I promised. We also supported a tougher resolution, and we consider that it was not necessary, but to continue our interaction and our unity with the United Nations we proceeded with the resolution. Now, you repeated that you believe the use of force is not necessary, and of course we welcome this. Force in the Middle East brings us nothing by itself. As you do, I also believe that all the efforts should be made to resolve the problem by peaceful means. The key problem is whether he has weapons of mass destruction or not. If we can say to the effect that he has weapons of mass destruction, it should be up to the inspectors to find them. I do not have any doubt, the United States and Russia, and especially you and me, should not have any doubt that the international inspectors are prepared to do their jobs faithfully. They have said that they are not encountering any obstacles in Iraq. Moreover, in order to support the work of inspectors, I sent the Deputy Foreign Minister to Iraq in order to help inspectors work without any conditions. If good conditions are created for the inspectors, we will have good results. We received information from the inspectors to the effect that our efforts produced results in Iraq and some decisions were taken by Iraqi leadership. For example, they got access to private houses and permission for some scientists to leave the country, which is another step forward. I think this is a result of our joint efforts, which we are conducting with the Iraqi leadership and our joint efforts produced these results. On one hand, it is pressure, on the other hand, it is the work we are conducting with the Iraqi leadership. And of course, as you know, inspectors are conducting inspections whether they are satisfied about encountering obstacles or not. If I am not mistaken, they should report to the Security Council at the end of the month about their efforts. And I am not, of course, listening to all of these statements made by the Foreign Ministers, but as far as I know they are saying all of the correct things. Powell and Ivanov have good contacts between each other at the highest levels. All efforts are being made for us to work together with good understanding and close direction. We also believe this approach is being followed by our U.S. friends. George, you also know that I have never used this issue in our internal politics, and I think that those who do are mistaken. In the very near future, I will visit Berlin

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4

and Paris and will also meet Berlusconi. I expect that we will continue our joint endeavors on these Iraqi matters, which of course is very complicated and we will work very closely. I aim to work closely with you and to get our Foreign Ministries to do so, as well. (S)

Now on North Korea. When we met outside St. Petersburg, you told me at that meeting you were interested in our efforts in the area, of course taking into consideration our relationship with North Korea. And proceeding from this assumption, I recently sent Deputy Foreign Minister Losyukov to meet with Kim Jong Il. He spoke with him for 6 hours. He also spent time with the Deputy Foreign Minister. It was a good conversation. I am going to share with you, in a frank manner, the results of those conferences. Your experts will be able to assess what is accruing, but I will tell you what is going on in Pyongyang. First and foremost, they resolutely oppose the statements allegedly made to Kelly in 2002 about the nuclear program. They said statements were extorted by the American side to be used later on. They said, at the present stage, North Korea does not have any plans to create nuclear weapons. But, most importantly North Korea will be able to return to the NPT. Given, of course, there will be guarantees with its security, economic problems, and sovereignty. I think that it provides a basis for the solution to these problems. Kim Jong Il personally says he is prepared for removal of concerns with direct dialogue with the United States. Our diplomats have the impression they are prepared for flexibility or even reciprocity. And also another condition, I don't know whether you like it or not, but you should know it, they consider the one basic condition is the written guarantee for their security and sovereignty which will be provided by the United States of America. I draw attention to the statement you made about resolving the problem without the use of force. I think this is a good start of constructive dialogue. Probably you, and your experts in the State Department, understand that what is going on in Iraq only exacerbates the situation in North Korea. Allegedly, there is something in North Korea and Iraq that can not be found as of now. In one situation you have resorted to force, while you want to find some other resolution for the other. The shortest path to reducing tensions is direct dialogue. The North Koreans are afraid of internationalizing the issue. They told us they do not want that. We stand ready to help in the discussions. Our original position was that there should be multi-national guarantees, and we are cooperating with the United States. But now that we hear from the North Koreans about their position, maybe not. This might prolong the problem with North Korea.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

5

Let Powell and Ivanov chat about this. We proceed on the same basis as the United States in that North Korea should be a nuclear-free zone. Mr. Armitage is here in Moscow now, the Deputy Secretary of State, so I will give instructions for the Deputy Foreign Minister to give him information about the meeting that took place in North Korea. Now, about your saving your best tie for St. Petersburg, I am going to have them sew me up a new suit for the occasion. I also believe other leaders will have their spouses with them, because they should take part in the festivities, it will be beautiful. (S)

The President: Yeah, it will cost me a little money, that is the problem. (U)

President Putin: You know we formally will also have a summit with the EU. The number of participants is growing very quickly. You know in Europe, the EU is very rapidly expanding. (S)

The President: Yes, I know they are, but they are not expanding with two very important countries, me and you. (S)

President Putin: Yes, you are right. (U)

The President: Listen, Vladimir, thank you for the phone call. We will continue to consult on North Korea. I will tell Colin about our conversation. I feel very strongly that we can't make this a U.S.-North Korea issue. It is a problem for the Japanese, it is a problem for the South Koreans, it is a problem for the Chinese. It is a problem for you, it is a problem for the world and Mr. Kim Jong Il has to understand that. We will figure out a strategy to achieve our common objective. So, thank you, friend, I will stay in touch, I promise you. (S)

President Putin: Thank you very much, and give my best regards to Laura. (U)

The President: Thank you, sir. Best wishes to Lyudmila. (U)

President Putin: Alright. (U)

The President: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~